Dublin, Jan. 18. 1865.

Dear Mrs Chapman — A pleasant new year, long life, happiness & a free country to all the Chapmans & all the Westons!

About two weeks since I was very much gratified by the receipt of a note from you, the first for a very long time. I have of late been only a [illegible] spectator & have therefore not been surprised that I heard from some of my American friends much more rarely than heretofore. Though I never at any former time had them more continually in my remembrance. The absorbing subject with me (apart from my own special interests) for the last 25 years has been the same as theirs — and of late the interest has of course been more intense than ever, whilst the feeling that I could do any to aid them has been far less. Nevertheless I have followed the events of the war with unflagging attention, very often depressed by the necessity of waiting for days & even weeks for information concerning the progress of the good cause — & almost always amazed by the energy, resources & perseverance exhibited by the Southerners in their efforts to obtain an unfettered victory for their "evil institution." As to the extent of sympathy for them which exists in these countries I confess it has always amazed me although I think ~~many~~ there are many ways of explaining its ~~[illegible]~~ which do not redound to the credit of the sympathizers for consistency, good sense or humanity.

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ignorance of American institutions, history, & geography — the pro-slavery position of 99-100ths of our American visitors, northern as well as southern — the snubbing that the English has so often got from former American government — the Trent affair — the aristocratic tendencies of nearly all the English nobility, gentry, & wealthy classes as well as of all who aspire to be wealthy — the pleasure felt in seeing a great republic in a fix, & the desire to have the Great Experiment turn out a failure — the halting course of the North at the outbreak of the war, respecting slavery, & the disposition that evidently prevailed at that time to make almost any concession to the slaveholders provided the Union could be peacefully restored — British commercial jealousy — and as I know the feeling which existed in the minds of some very intelligent & worthy folks that America was aggressive & ambitious & that it would be better for the rest of the world that two great empires should be formed beyond the Atlantic who should have plenty to do watching one another — rather than one mighty whole domineering over the rest of the civilized world — All these factors have had a powerful influence. And yet it remains a fact that the friendly feeling towards the North which prevails amongst that powerful though not prominent portion of the English people which ranks between the peasantry & the wealthy gentry & manufacturers has sufficed to prevent any serious disposition to take an active part in the American quarrel ~~struggle~~ at the time of the Trent affair at which the feeling was nearly unanimous as to the unpardonable character of the American captain; there never had any fear of British intervention on the part of the South. I mean of Governmental intervention. There has been plenty of blockade running which I don't think the Government could prevent & some disastrous supplying of ships of war which Government should have been more active in discountenancing than they always have been – though I think it is now sincerely disapproved & discountenanced.

I do not write to defend – far from it but to explain & account for much which I deplore as much as you do. My admiration of the American people has been greatly exalted by the events of the war – & there is no people whose prosperity I regard as so essential to the happiness & civilization of mankind. I am more of a republican than ever – & I have less & less hope for the poor of Europe so long as they remain the victims & playthings of monarchical & aristocratic institutions, & feudal traditions. – I have never been in a public meeting in which the American question was discussed or explained, in which the great majority was not unmistakeably on the northern side – & as far as I am informed no public meeting has been fairly called & controlled without a similar result. The Bristol mob is one of the most brutal & ignorant in England & a northern meeting there was broken up by violence – but then I doubt not the rioters were paid & knew & cared nothing about the merits of the question in hand.

This much is certain that except for the evil purpose of revenge, no good could be gained by a war with England. There will be plenty to do in reconstructing the Union without undertaking another. A war which would put back America however it might injure & punish England whilst it would certainly inflict no real injury on England except upon the very classes who are & always have been your friends & well wishers. Much as I have said I don't know whether I appear as an apologist & a defender of England — but this I do know that I am more zealous for you than for her.

About 2 months ago I sold my beautiful house in the country 6 miles from Dublin & am now living in one of the pleasantest of all the pleasantest suburbs of ~~Dub~~ the city. My daughter found the country too lonely. We have a comfortable house with a spare room for a visitor. My son Alfred with his wife live in my house in town. He is my efficient partner in business.

Mrs May of Leicester is my kind frequent correspondent. She told me in her last letter of Mr & Madame Laugel's pleasant Thanksgiving visit to you. How you must enjoy having such a good & talented son in law & such a pleasant bright & loving daughter. I was greatly gratified by their kind reception when I was last in London. Tho I have written very little to your sisters of late this was from no want of the regard & gratitude I feel towards them but simply that I did not feel as if I could give them value for the trouble they would have in reading & answering my letters. With my best respects to you &c I am

Ever truly yours Richd D Webb

Ms A.9.2.30.29